



Al-Mutaffifin

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Name

It is derived from the very first verse; *Wayl-ul-lil mutaffifin*.

Period of Revelation

The style of the Surah and its subject matter clearly show that it was revealed in the earlier stage at Makkah, when Surah after Surah was being revealed to impress the doctrine of the Hereafter on the people's minds. This Surah was revealed when they had started ridiculing the Muslims and disgracing them publicly in the streets and in their assemblies, but persecution and manhandling of the Muslims had not yet started. Some commentators regard this as a Madani Surah. This misunderstanding has been caused by a tradition from Ibn Abbas according to which when the Prophet (peace be upon him) arrived in Al-Madinah, the evil of giving short weight and measure was widespread among the people there. Then Allah sent down *Wayl-ul-lil mutaffifin* and the people began to give full weight and measure. (Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Marduyah, Ibn Jarir, Baihaqi: Shuab-il-Iman) But, as we have explained in the introduction to Surah Ad-Dahr, the common practice with the companions and their successors

was that when they found that a verse applied to a certain matter of life, they would say that it had been sent down concerning that particular matter. Therefore, what is proved by the tradition of Ibn Abbas is that when after his emigration to Al-Madinah the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw that the evil was widespread among the people there, he recited this Surah before them by Allah's command and this helped them mend their ways.

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Surah too is the Hereafter. In the first six verses the people have been taken to task for the prevalent evil practice in their commercial dealings. When they had to receive their due from others, they demanded that it be given in full, but when they had to measure or weigh for others, they would give less than what was due. Taking this one evil as an example out of countless evils prevalent in society, it has been said that it is an inevitable result of the heedlessness of the Hereafter. Unless the people realized that one day they would have to appear before God and account for each single act they performed in the world, it was not possible that they would adopt piety and righteousness in their daily affairs. Even if a person might practice honesty in some of his less important dealings in view of "honesty is the best policy", he would never practice honesty on occasions when dishonesty would seem to be "the best policy". Man can develop true and enduring honesty only when he fears God and sincerely believes in the Hereafter, for then he would regard honesty not merely as a policy but as a duty and obligation, and his being

constant in it, or otherwise, would not be dependent on its being useful or useless in the world.

Thus, after making explicit the relation between morality and the doctrine of the Hereafter in an effective and impressive way, in verses 7-17, it has been said: The deeds of the wicked are already being recorded in the black list of the culprits, and in the Hereafter they will meet with utter ruin. Then in verses 18-28, the best end of the virtuous has been described and it has been said that their deeds are being recorded in the list of the exalted people, on which are appointed the angels nearest to Allah.

In conclusion, the believers have been consoled, and the disbelievers warned, as if to say: The people who are disgracing and humiliating the believers today are culprits, who, on the Resurrection Day, will meet with a most evil end in consequence of their conduct, and these very believers will feel comforted when they see their fate.

1. Woe to those who give less
in weight.*¹

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ

*¹ In the original the word *mutaffifin* has been used, which is derived from *tatfif*, a word used for an inferior and base thing in Arabic. Terminologically, *tatfif* is used for giving short weight and short measure fraudulently, for the person who acts thus while measuring or weighing, does not defraud another by any substantial amount, but skimps small amounts from what is due to every customer cleverly, and the poor customer does not know of what and of how much he is being deprived by the seller.

2. Those who, when they take by measure from people, take in full.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ
يَسْتَوْفُونَ

3. And when they give by measure or weigh for them, they cause loss.*2

وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ

*2 At several places in the Quran, giving of short measure and weight has been condemned and measuring fully and weighing rightly has been stressed. In Surah Al-Anaam, it has been enjoined: You should use a full measure and a just balance. We charge one only with that much responsibility that one can bear. (verse 152). In Surah Bani Israil, it has been said: Give full measure when you measure and weigh with even scales. (verse 35). In Surah Ar-Rehman, it has been stressed: Do not upset the balance: weigh with equity and do not give short weight. (verses 8-9). The people of the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) were punished for the reason that the evil of giving short measure and weight had become widespread among them and in spite of his counsel and advice they did not refrain from it.

4. Do such (people) not think that they will be raised again.

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ

5. On a Great Day*3

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

*3 A Great Day: the Day of Resurrection when all men and jinn will be called to account together in the divine court

and decisions of vital importance will be made pertaining to rewards and punishments.

6. The Day when all mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds.

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ



7. Nay, indeed, *4 the record of the wicked is in sijjeen. *5

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ



*4 That is, these people are wrong in thinking that they will be let off without being called to account when they have committed such and such crimes in the world.

*5 The word *sijjin* in the original is derived from *sijn* (a prison) and the explanation of it that follows shows that it implies the general register in which the actions and deeds of the people worthy of punishment are being recorded.

8. And what do you know what sijjeen is.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ



9. (It is) a written record.

كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ



10. Woe that Day to the deniers.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ



11. Those who deny the Day of Recompense.

الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ



12. And none denies it except every sinful transgressor.

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ



13. When Our verses are recited to him,^{*6} he says: “Tales of the ancient peoples.”

إِذَا تُلِّيَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ
الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

***6** Our verses: Those verses in which news of the Day of Recompense has been given.

14. Nay, but upon their hearts is rust of that which they have earned.^{*7}

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا
يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

***7** That is, they have no good reason for regarding the meting out of rewards and punishments as unreal. What has made them say is this: Is it that their hearts have become rusty because of their sins; therefore, a thing which is thoroughly reasonable appears unreal and unreasonable to them. The explanation of this rust as given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is as follows: When a servant commits a sin, it marks a black stain on his heart. If he offers repentance, the stain is washed off, but if he persists in wrongdoing, it spreads over the entire heart. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir, Hakim, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hibban and others).

15. Nay, indeed, they shall be debarred, on that Day, from (the mercy of) their Lord.^{*8}

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ
لَّحَجُوبُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

***8** That is, these people will remain deprived of the vision of Allah with which the righteous will be blessed. (For further explanation, see E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Qiyamah).

16. Then surely they shall (enter to) burn in Hellfire.

ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦﴾

17. Then it will be said: “This is what you used to deny.”*9

ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَكذِبُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

*9 That is, they are wrong in thinking that there is going to be no meting out of rewards and punishments.

18. Nay, indeed the record of the righteous is in illiyeen.

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ ﴿١٨﴾

19. And what do you know what illiyuun is.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ ﴿١٩﴾

20. (It is) a written record.

كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

21. It is witnessed by those brought near (to Allah).

يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

22. Indeed, the righteous shall be in delight.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

23. On high couches they shall be looking.

عَلَى الْأَرْآئِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. You shall recognize in their faces the radiance of delight.

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٢٤﴾

25. They shall be given to drink of a pure wine, sealed.

يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

26. Whose seal shall be musk.*10 And for this let them strive, those who want to strive.

خِتْمُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ
فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَفِسُونَ

*10 One meaning of the words *khtamu-hu-misk* is that the vessels containing the wine will carry the seal of musk instead of clay or wax. Accordingly the verse means: This will be the choicest kind of wine, which will be superior to the wine flowing in the canals, and it will be served by the attendants of Paradise in vessels sealed with musk to the dwellers of Paradise. Another meaning can also be: When that wine will pass down the throat, its final effect will be of the flavor of musk. This state is contrary to the wines of the world which give out an offensive smell as soon as the bottle opens and one feels its horrid smell even while drinking and also when it passes down the throat.

27. And that (wine) shall have the mixture of Tasneem.*11

وَمِنْ رَاجِهِ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ

*11 *Tasneem* means height. Thus, *Tasnim* will be a fountain flowing down from a height.

28. A spring from which those near (to Allah) shall drink.

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ

29. Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ
الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ

30. And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another.

وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

31. And when they returned to their own folk, they would return jesting.^{*12}

وَإِذَا أُنْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمُ أَنْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

***12** That is, they returned home rejoicing, thinking that they had made fun of such and such a Muslim, had passed evil remarks against him and subjected him to ridicule among the people.

32. And when they saw them, they would say: “Surely, these are (the people) gone astray.”^{*13}

وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُّونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

***13** That is, they have lost their reason. They have deprived themselves of the gains and enjoyments of the world and have experienced dangers and undergone hardships only for the reason that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has deluded them with the Hereafter, Heaven and Hell. They are giving up whatever is present here on the false hope that the promise of some Paradise has been held out to them after death, and they are enduring the hardships in the present life only for the reason that they have been threatened with some Hell in the next world.

33. And they had not been sent to be guardians over them.^{*14}

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

***14** In this brief sentence the mockers and jesters have been

given an instructive warning to the effect: Even if what the Muslims have believed in, is false, they are not harming you at all. They regard something as true, and are accordingly adopting a certain moral attitude for themselves, for their own good. Allah has not appointed you to be keepers over them so that you may be free to criticize and persecute those who are not harming you in any way.

34. So today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers.

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ
يَضْحَكُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. On high couches they shall be looking.

عَلَى الْأَرْوَاحِ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36. Have the disbelievers (not) been duly rewarded for what they used to do.^{*15}

هَلْ ثَوَّبَ لِمَا كَانُوا
يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

***15** There is a subtle satire in this sentence. In the world, the disbelievers used to persecute the believers, thinking it was an act of virtue. In the Hereafter, the believers will be enjoying life in Paradise, and watching the disbelievers being punished in Hell. They will say to themselves: What a reward they have earned for their acts of virtue.

